

Discovering Talent Digitally: The Feltmakers' Design Competition

The Feltmakers' Design Competition was launched 27 years ago to support the roots of the Company and maintain links with colleges. It is open to students and apprentices as well as new start-up businesses.

Entrants must design a hat whose primary component is felt. While there are no particular design rules, the hat or headpiece must work on the head (and be comfortable!), it can be couture or more commercial, well made and able to be reproduced in a workroom. Colleges are encouraged to include the competition in their curriculum so it works as a perfect focus as part of a course. Apprentices and new start-ups also find it a good opportunity to display their skills and design prowess.

As well as the generous financial prizes on offer, the winner gains work experience in Rachel Trevor-Morgan's workroom and an opportunity to work within a more commercial factory setting with Ian Wright in Luton.

The 2021 Design Competition was once again organised a little differently due to the ongoing pandemic. Usually, the hats are judged first-hand, but this year, entrants were requested to send images of their hats, together with the relevant backing information, digitally. All the information was then collated and sent to the judges electronically. Those shortlisted were then asked to send in physical hats and artwork.

The final judging took place on 6 May in St James's. Milliners Rachel Trevor-Morgan, Edwina Ibbotson and Noel Stewart were there in person, along with journalist, Hilary Alexander. Former hat manufacturer, William Horsman, milliner, Eda Rose, and hat journalist, Carole Denford, joined via Zoom. Each hat was discussed and inspected in depth until the final decisions were made. As ever, the quality of entries was extremely high and the winning hats were superb and varied.

Traditionally, all the winning hats are put on display at the annual Livery Banquet at Mansion House but sadly this event was,

once again, unable to take place. However, they were displayed at the Autumn Dinner at Haberdashers' Hall, where the winner was presented with her prize.



1st Prize

Sarah Blackmore, KCC/Morley College HNC graduate (2020)
'Again' inspired by the black shiny plastic tray in a selection box of Christmas biscuits. The Christmas reference anticipates a time when friends and family can once again get together to celebrate.



2nd Prize

Lucy Davies, Student with Justine Bradley-Hill
'Mother of Dragons' – inspired by Game of Thrones. This reflects Daenerys' character: feminine but with a hint of warrior.

3rd Prize

Rebecca Gray, KCC/Morley College
A careful look inside the crown of this beautifully made top hat revealed a scene from Little Red Riding Hood.



Special Category Awards:

Craftsmanship

Fleur Curtis, new starter, Oscar & Willow Millinery
'It's always darkest before the dawn' – a theatrical representation of night and dawn – based on Thomas Fuller's quote.

Commercial Appeal

Lynne Hawkes, new starter, Ellie Millinery
'Metamorphosis' – inspired by glass sculptor, Chihuly, and designed to encapsulate positive change.

Artwork and Presentation

Nike Lachner, Fashion Institute Vienna
'Dorothee' - inspired by the psychological phenomenon of "pareidolia" and the talking flowers from Alice in Wonderland.

Innovative Use of Felt

Nara Taylor, KCC/Morley College
Based on the properties of felt as a filter using acrylic paint, silver leaf, and tufts of merino felt.

Rachel Trevor-Morgan